

Utah Watershed Review

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Water Leaders Discuss Bear River

By Jack Wilbur
Editor, Utah Watershed Review

GARDEN CITY, UT—Leading water quality and agriculture officials from Idaho, Wyoming and Utah met recently in Garden City, Utah to discuss current conditions and the future of the Bear River and Bear Lake. It's the first time since the inception of the Bear River Water Quality Task Force that so many high-level officials from the three states have gathered together to discuss the quality of the water in the Bear River.

"This is a chance to tear down the barriers between borders," said Jack Barnett, Bear River Commission, who moderated the four-hour panel discussion of USDA, state agriculture and state water quality directors during the Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality conference held here September 2-4. According to Barnett, the solution to water quality problems along the entire length of the river may rest with citizens and lawmakers along the Wasatch Front in Utah.

"From the [water] quality standpoint we're a little later coming along," said Don Ostler, director, Utah Division of Water Quality. "But hopefully we can continue to follow the example of cooperation and coordination of the Bear River Commission and continue to make progress in all three states on this important issue."

"Our downtown neighbors are starting to understand the importance of open space and healthy agriculture in keeping their water and air clean," said Utah Commissioner of Agriculture Cary Peterson. "With more people, more needs and more expectations, a clean and plentiful supply of water is critical."

While everyone around the table and in the audience seemed to agree that active water quality improve-

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Drought Draws Bear Lake to Near Record Low Level

GARDEN CITY, UT--Bear Lake is nearly out of irrigation water and the Bear River is running desperately low even in

the lower reaches of the watershed, Dee Hansen, chairman, Bear River Commission. Hansen told an audience of water quality experts at the

Utah nonpoint Source Water Quality Conference in early September, that it will take record snowfall this winter to avoid



A lot of Bear Lake Shore line is exposed right now, as the lake is at its lowest level since 1936.



Jack Barnett (standing in the photo to the left) moderates a panel of water leaders from Utah, Idaho and Wyoming.

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ment programs throughout the 500 miles of the Bear River are important, figuring out how to pay for improvements is more difficult.

“The real answer is economics, economics, economics,” said, John Etchepare, director, Wyoming Department of Agriculture. In Wyoming, there are five applicants for every one who funded under USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), added George Cleek, assistant state conservationist for Wyoming, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In Idaho and Utah, the funding issues are similar. “More often than not producers are willing to step up to the plate, “ said Gary Bahr, water quality branch chief, Idaho Department of Agriculture. The problem is often related to funding rather than getting willing participants, Bahr added.

Despite several sources of federal and state money including Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA EQIP funds and other sources, the biggest source of future water quality improvement funds may be the urban areas at the end of the watershed.

Phillip “Skip” Nelson, state conservationist, NRCS-Utah, witnessed an interesting large-scale watershed improvement effort during the 1980s and early 1990s while working for NRCS in New York State. New York City paid for a rural watershed restoration effort in the largely agricultural upper watershed that supplies surface water drinking water to the city’s approximately eight million residents. A similar effort in Utah may be pushed by Salt Lake, Davis and Weber counties in the future as population pressure makes the idea of using Bear River Water as a drinking water source a real possibility.

Water from the upper watershed was already being used for culinary purposes downstream in the New York City example. But when Congress passed an amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act in the 1986, the city was faced with additional regulations. They could build expensive filtration plants to provide additional protection, or

they could conduct a comprehensive watershed protection effort. Faced with the reality that the filtration plants would cost \$5 billion to construct and \$400 million a year to run and maintain, the city chose to work with land-owners in the upper watershed on watershed protection and restoration efforts.

A key part of the New York City effort was to keep the upper watershed in agriculture, said Nelson. “They didn’t want to put one farmer out of business,” Nelson urged. City officials realized that it would be easier to keep the water in the upper watershed healthy if the land remained in agricultural production, rather than being developed into housing, roads and strip malls.

While the situation on the Bear River is different, Nelson, Barnett and others on the panel agree that Salt Lake City and the other larger Wasatch Front Municipalities at the end of the watershed may be willing to step up financially in the future. At stake is one of the last major water sources in the area not being used already for culinary purposes.

The second day of the conference, participants took a bus tour around Bear Lake and stopped at several locations to learn about water quantity and quality issues. Stops included a Utah Division of Wildlife Resources trout spawning area on Swan Creek, and the Lifton pumping station at the north end of the lake.

The Utah NPS conference is held in a different part of the state each year as a way to focus on local water quality issues. The first day of the conference focused on the political issues, the second day was the tour of the lake and the final day included more detailed presentations about ongoing projects and efforts along the Bear River in each of the three states.

"Lake Level" continued from front

serious shortfalls next summer. "Runoff from the last four years combined equals 24 percent of one normal year's runoff, Hansen said. Water flows in the Bear River for 2003 are at record low levels, he added.

A long-standing agreement about lake level and water draw-down has also been altered this year due to the drought. Amendments to the Bear River Compact several years ago included an agreement between irrigators, Pacificorp and agencies that the top 21 feet of Bear Lake--from 5,902 to 5,923 feet above sea level--will

be used as reservoir storage for irrigation and power generation purposes. That agreement was changed this year to stop draw-down of the lake at 5,904. The lake is currently about one foot above that mark. The level is expected to drop to 5,904.5 by the end of the irrigation season.

By press time, reservoirs in the central and upper divisions of the watershed were no longer able to divert water from the river for storage. It was expected that a similar "water emergency" order would soon be issued for the lower division.

Upstream reservoirs are currently depleted, said Hansen. "Without an unusually high snow-pack [this winter] agriculture will suffer serious shortages next year," Hansen urged.

2004 NPS Conference Set for Bryce Canyon, Ruby's Inn

Mark your calendars. The 2004 Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality Conference will be held at Rubys Inn at the entrance to Bryce Canyon National Park.

The conference is scheduled to

take place September 14-16, 2004. More details will be soon, but expect a return to the traditional conference format that balances general plenary sessions with concurrent technical presentations.



Utah Watershed Review

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Three 'Surprise' Awards Given to Thank Conference Staff Members

GARDEN CITY, UT--While information about most of the Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality Awards can be found in a story on page four of this publication, the NPS Conference Planning Committee wanted to thank three members of the planning committee separately.

Virginia Sligting, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, Dee Cummings, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Nancy Mesner, Utah State University, were all given awards for their

years of outstanding service to the Utah NPS Water Quality Task Force and the NPS conference.

Virginia and Dee take care of most of the logistical aspects of the conference from registration and compiling the agendas to ordering the food.

Nancy serves as chair of the awards committee and she participates in planning the conference tour most years.

It would be difficult, if not impossible to put on the conference each year without the tireless efforts of these three outstanding individuals.

~Conference planning committee

Two More Chances: Getting in Step Workshops set for SLC, Richfield

The Getting in Step outreach campaign development workshops have already been held in Logan and Provo.

More than 40 coordinators of rural and urban watersheds in Utah have already received the training that is designed to help local outreach coordinators to plan, research, execute and evaluate a watershed outreach campaign.

"This training is designed to get people thinking beyond the fact sheet and brochure," said Jack Wilbur, information and education coordinator, Utah Nonpoint Source Task Force. "Who are your audiences? Why will a fact sheet and brochure be the best outputs to reach your audiences? How do you know? These are some of the basic questions watershed groups and municipalities should be asking before starting an outreach campaign," Wilbur explained.

During the workshop participants learn how to plan an outreach campaign and research target audiences. Participants also learn how to develop effective messages, how to use audience research to pick the best medium and distribution method(s) for the messages, and finally how to evaluate your campaign's successes or failures.

The upcoming Salt Lake City session will be the standard one-day format, including lunch. The Richfield session will be part of the Utah Watershed Coordinating Council meeting and will take place over two days in a combined meeting that will also discuss other watershed issues.



Virginia Sligting is presented her water quality award by Dr. Charles Gay, Utah State University. Virginia, Dee and Nancy were surprised by their awards.

Adopt-A-Waterbody Program Gets New Website, Goal

Adopt-A-Waterbody

Editor's Note: While the Adopt-A-Waterbody program has been around for many years, it is undergoing a make-over of sorts. A new web site that includes an online application is available at <http://adoptawaterbody.gov> and a new brochure and application will soon be distributed throughout the state. An excerpt from the current program brochure appears below.

Adopt-A-Waterbody is an innovative community involvement program designed to benefit Utah's water resources and be rewarding and educational for the volunteer groups involved. A partnership of three state agencies directs the program. It includes the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, the Utah Department of Natural Resources, and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food. In addition, Utah State University Water Quality Extension provides local coordination and assistance for water-related education, monitoring, and restoration activities.

Why Adopt ?

The Adopt-A-Waterbody program unites a variety of volunteer groups throughout the state to work toward one purpose: to protect and enhance the waters of the beautiful state of Utah.

The program's goals are to:

- Promote water education activities.



The banner, logos and photos above are from the new Adopt-A-Waterbody web site. Is site is now up and running at: <http://adoptawaterbody.utah.gov>

- Encourage partnerships involving private groups and public agencies.
- Advocate pollution prevention through personal stewardship projects.
- Acknowledge the water quality education/improvement efforts of individuals and groups.

Who Can Adopt and Where?

Any individual or group can adopt a public surface or ground water resource, such as a lake, pond, stream, wetland, or aquifer. Some of the types of groups already involved in the program include individuals; schools; scouting troops; local governments; and

civic, environmental, and nonprofit organizations. Most groups adopt small sections of waterways near their homes or organizations.

What's Involved?

Adoption means making a commitment to become an active steward for a specific resource area. Groups can take care of a water resource in a variety of ways, such as

- Organizing a cleanup day.
- Monitoring water quality.
- Mapping pollution sources in the watershed.
- Writing educational articles.
- Organizing a Clean Water Fair.
- Stabilizing streambanks with vegetation.
- Building trail or water access points.

2003 NPS Water Quality Award Winners Honored at Annual Conference

GARDEN CITY, UT--One of the highlights of the annual Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality Conference is the NPS Awards presentation. This year there were four categories of recipients: landowners, organizations, educators and professionals.

A total of 18 award were given this year. Many of the recipients attended the awards barbecue during the conference. Those not able to attend will be presented their awards at another time.

Along with the Rex family and Shane & Sid Munk, Chris Griffin received a landowner award for containing hog waste runoff in the Newton Watershed.

In the educator category in addition to Doug Garfield, Jeff Salt received an award for his work in educating citizens in the Jordan River Watershed about water quality. Andree' Walker was also recognized in this category for successful statewide efforts in educating youth and teachers about watershed and water quality issues.

Three organiza-

tions were honored for their efforts in watershed protection and restoration. Nucor Bar Mill--Plymouth Division, represented by Dave Anderson at the ceremony, was recognized for their ongoing support of education and their implementation of Adopt-A-Waterbody efforts on the Malad River. Synderville Basin Water Reclamation District was honored for remarkable efforts in reducing phosphorus loads to East Canyon Creek. The Utah Federation for Youth was recognized for adopting a segment of the Jordan River through downtown Salt Lake City.

The professional category winners include Lee Broadbent, NRCS-Coalville, Lyla Detmer, Franklin Soil and Water Conserva-

tion District, Franklin, ID, Mark Peterson, Utah Farm Bureau, Judith Sims, USU, and Sylvia Talbot, Utah Association of Conservation Districts.



Above: Doug Garfield (left) receives a Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality Award in the educator category from Nancy Mesner, Utah State University. Doug is a secondary school science teacher in Summit County during the school year and the Chalk Creek Watershed information and education coordinator during the summer.



Left: Members of the Rex family, Rich County, received an award in the landowner category for their work to implement water quality improvements on their farm. Pictured left to right: Charles Rex, Connie Rex, Denee Rex, Camette Rex and Carolee Rex.



Sid Munk, his wife Kathryn, Tammy Munk and her husband Shane show off their award in the landowner category. They relocated an animal feedyard and made other water quality improvements on their land in Cache County along the Bear River.



Shelly Quick (left), Utah Division of Water Quality, stands with Mesner to receive her award in the professional category. Shelly has coordinated the Adopt-A-Waterbody effort in Utah for the past seven years, along with conducting water quality education programs in classrooms throughout the state.